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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that government agencies have traditionally been concerned with recording and reporting only the dimensions of the formal "Core" of educational activity--the sequential ladder ranging from kindergarten through graduate and professional schools. Missing is a similar recording of participation in the "Educational Periphery"--vocationally oriented programs in business, government, the military, proprietary schools, and anti-poverty programs as well as culture and leisure oriented programs in Core institutions such as religious education, television, correspondence courses and private associations. According to data drawn from various sources, the total learning force, in terms of 1970 head count participation, is about evenly divided between the Core and the Periphery. Public and governmental acknowledgement of the Periphery's size and significance should lead to a re-evaluation of educational priorities, to innovation within Core institutions, and to a new understanding of the variety of alternative possibilities for individual learning and for public policy. (JS)

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THE "NEW" DOMAIN OF POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

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We all know that the American educational system has grown a great deal over the past few decades and indeed since the beginning of the republic. We know that this growth is reflected in both absolute numbers of participants, higher rates of participation for cohort age groups, and large increases in outlays of public monies at all levels of government. Probably, many of us are aware of the intricacies and subtleties which are at work in each of these three areas. And especially the reservations involved at the present time of the bust in the birth rate and the boom in budget balancing.

But with all our knowledge and understanding of the growth of the "educational system" there still remain large areas of educational activity where we are still ignorant and uninformed, and when I mention education, I am not here referring to learning. I am simply referring to a basic understanding of the structural dimensions of participation in formal, organized educational experiences by the American population as regards numbers of participants and the amounts of expenditures and employment involved.

Until now, all our traditional governmental agencies have concentrated their efforts on recording and reporting the dimensions of the Core--that sequential ladder of formal educational activity ranging from kindergarten through graduate and professional schools. Missing from this accounting is the recording of participation in what I call the "Educational Periphery"--the variety of formally organized educational activities ranging from vocationally oriented programs in business, government, the military, Proprietary schools and anti-poverty programs, to cultural and leisure-oriented programs in regular Core institutions,

religious education, television, correspondence courses, and private associations. These programs satisfy the interests and needs, both cultural and vocational, of millions of individuals.

Also overlooked in our traditional approach to education are the variety of informal non-organized ways in which people learn and educate themselves. Michael Marien has referred to many of their activities in his work on the "educational complex." By informal, I mean education through the media, local cultural facilities, activities in organizations, and the different forms of self-directed learning in which people engage for the purpose of this presentation. I shall focus attention on the formally organized aspects of non-Core educational activity represented in the Educational Periphery. At the same time, however, I wish to emphasize to you that it is the area of informal education which will in the future present some of the greater challenges for creative thinking in educational policy.

A great disparity exists among these various estimates regarding the size of the Periphery. This may be attributed to different conceptual frameworks about the definition of an educational activity; differences in the minimum time involvement deemed necessary for inclusion; and different approaches to the phenomenon of double counting which occurs when the same individual participates in more than one activity during the course of a single year. The data presented in the following table are drawn from a variety of sources, both published and unpublished. Extensive contact was made with various organizations and personnel involved in the Periphery and the Core. Consideration was given to the differing estimates presented by various studies and attempts were made to reconcile these differences, where possible.

A more comprehensive assessment of educational activity portrays the following picture: (See table, page 3). We note that the total learning force, in terms of total 1970 head count participation, is about evenly divided between the educational Core--the traditional force system of schools and colleges--and the educational Perphery.

The Learning Force (1940-1976)
(millions)

	1940	1950	1955	1960	1965	Current Estimates 1970	1976
I. The Educational Core							
1. Pre-primary	.7	1.3	2.0	2.7	3.1	4.4	5.5
2. Elementary	20.5	21.0	26.0	29.1	32.0	32.3	30.0
3. Secondary	7.1	6.5	9.3	13.0	16.8	19.8	22.1
4. Undergraduate	1.4	2.4	2.4	3.2	4.9	6.5	8.3
5. Graduate	.1	.2	.2	.4	.6	.8	1.1
Sub-Total	29.8	31.4	39.9	48.4	57.4	63.8	67.0
II. The Educational Periphery							
1. Organizational	8.2	10.2	10.9	13.0	14.5	21.7	27.4
2. Proprietary	2.5	3.5	3.5	4.0	7.8	9.6	18.1
3. Anti-poverty	-	-	-	-	2.8	5.1	7.0
4. Correspondence	2.7	3.4	3.5	4.5	5.0	5.7	6.7
5. TV	-	-	-	.01	5.0	7.5	10.0
6. Other adult	3.9	4 8	5.1	6.8	9.1	10.7	13.2
Sub-Total	17.3	21.9	23.0	28.3	44.2	60.3	82.4
III. The Learning Force (I + II)	47.1	53.3	62.9	76.7	101.6	124.1	149.4

What are some of the implications which emerge from our considerations of the learning force? The fundamental challenge to public policy in the future will be to innovate new programs and experiences which will afford opportunities for growth and development in ways not afforded by the traditional Core educational system. Public policy must rethink the content and purposes of organized education. Does education refer only to the sorts of activities represented in the Core? Traditional concepts of education have focused upon education as an activity engaged in by children or youth as a preparation for life prior to entering the "real" world.

The learning force concept leads to a substantially contrary view of education. My view challenges conventional wisdom about the purposes and goals of the educational system, and brings to the forefront many basic questions: Who is to be educated? Where is one to be educated? At what time in life? In what type of programs? For what purposes? It challenges the monopoly which the traditional Core educational establishment has had over public resources. It poses questions for our traditional measures regarding "educational attainment" and disputes the primacy of credentials as a measure of that attainment. Bringing into reckoning a vast array of already existing alternative educational programs in the Periphery,it presents the possibility for an innovative and creative approach to planning for education which can better serve the needs of both individuals and society.

Consideration of the Periphery leads to a number of suggestions regarding the implications of the Learning Force concept. My contention is that the concept has a direct relevance and contribution to make to our understanding of what education is in modern society; to the changing relationships between education and society; to the purposes and functioning of educational planning on the part of government and other social institutions; and to new possibibilities for personal development in both work and leisure in our emerging post-industrial society. Activities in the Periphery provide a new framework for the considerations of educational policy. A recognition of the total Learning Force provides the

basis for making an accurate assessment of the true dimensions of education in American society, not only regarding enrollments, a matter which has been emphasized in this article, but also comprehensive estimates regarding total educational expenditures and total educational employment. A consideration of the Learning Force also provides the basis for making more rational decisions regarding policy for the Core as well as providing the basis for new initiatives in the Periphery.

In order to think about policy for the Core we will have to increase our understanding of the Periphery as a system of education which offers a variety of alternative possibilities for individual learning and hence, for public policy. A number of historical developments in the Core make it necessary to bring to the forefront now, more than ever before, a consideration of the Periphery. Among these are the following:

1. the increasing rate of high school completion, now at the level of 80 percent, very simply, after 100 years, the K-12 system will not serve as the main area for future growth in the Core.

2. certain systemic regularities in higher education which seem to have led to stabilized relationships between entrance and completion, thereby raising serious questions about the goal of "a universal higher education for all" as the next phase of development in the Core. For the past 50 years, approximately 54% of high school graduates have matriculated into 4-year degree-credit programs of higher education.

3. an increased sense of disaffection with and challenge to the power and hegemony of higher education as being the ultimate and only depository of "higher" learning.

4. an increasing discontent with the role which educational institutions have played in abetting the emergence of the "credentialized society."

5. the fiscal crises resulting from commitment to the increasing development and expansion of the Core.

6. the changing economic and social structure of society which indicates that many of our traditional notions as to what people should learn--where, when and how--are even less valid today than ever before--leading to a search for an educational system which will provide more meaningful alternatives along the line of "continuing education" or to use the Swedish term, "recurring education."

All of these factors indicate that our policy lenses should be broadened beyond the traditional focus of the educational system. Where the broadened spectrum leads to I do not know. That is one major issue for discussion today. We do know that in the past while the Core and Periphery have developed as two somewhat separate and distinct systems, there has always been a relationship between them. At the very least, both implicitly and explicitly, they exist as competitors for the dollars of both the public purse and the private consumer, insomuch as he does have the opportunity to exercise some choice. While in this area there has been some competition, the struggle has been somewhat akin to the likelihood that five midgets, albeit highly skilled, innovative and creative they may be, would have of winning the championship of the National Basketball Association.

In terms of program substance, there has been a good deal of interchange, with the Periphery serving as the frontier of innovation and experimentation and the Core coopting and institutionalizing those programs which demonstrate the greatest viability and success. In that sense we may observe the manner in which junior colleges have developed programs dealing with many of the specialized skills and training that has been regularly provided by proprietary institutions, business and industrial organizations. In the past, in order for Periphery programs to gain legitimization and accreditation it usually was necessary that they become absorbed within the institutional framework of the Core.

A major question confronting policy makers is whether this past trend shall be the wave of the future. Are policy-makers prepared to confront some basic questions about the relationship between schooling and learning, between education and occupation, and between credentials and capabilities; about what is the legitimate arena for public involvement in the support of education; about the larger questions of what should the people learn, when, where and how? If we approach the questions in this manner, I think we will discover that we alreasy possess in this country a whole variety of programs and possibilities, of alternatives to the regular schooling system--a matter we are now hearing much about--which deserves the serious attention and consideration of public policy-makers.

Where does this new perspective on the total domain of post-secondary education lead us? At the very least, the Office of Education should address itself to the problem of remedying some of the huge information gaps which exist in our current knowledge about the sizeable complexity of educational activities in the Periphery. I realize that some beginnings have already been made under the impetus of Dorothy Guilford and Morris Ullman of the Center for Educational Statistics. But, historically, these beginnings have a way of being terminated as soon as they begin. Witness also the recent decision to close the ERIC Center for Adult Education, strong evidence of the marginality and low level priority attached to non-Core activities by the Office of Education.

But even if detailed and comprehensive information were suddenly to be thrust upon us--I am pessimistic as to what difference this would make. Would federal policy be able to confront some of the hard questions (interestingly enough, usually labeled by social scientists and other such types as "soft" questions) about the goals of learning and personal development and how these relate to the huge behemoth of the Core which we have created, organized, legitimized and subsidized. Once we have a better comprehension of just what the "domain of education" is, is federal policy prepared to ask what the future shape and content of our educational system should be? I think that it is only when we confront

some of these more basic questions that we can then begin to think through some of the implications that the Periphery, the Learning Force and the various forms of informal learning considered in this presentation, have for the formulation of a "better" educational policy.